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March 9th, 1850

Read and ordered to be printed,

R E P O R T

OF THE

MINORITY OF THE COMMITTEE

ON

EDUCATION.

1870

DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR

1870

RECORDS

1870

MINORITY OF THE COMMITTEE

EDUCATION

R E P O R T .

We the undersigned members of the committee on Education instructed to enquire into the expediency of reporting a bill to establish upon a sure and permanent basis, a Primary School system in this State, ask leave to submit the following views:

That every member of society is eminently benefited by the order, security, virtue and happiness of the society in which he lives; that education is the fountain whence these blessings flow, the foundation of all civilization, the bulwark of liberty, of law and of government, the safeguard of justice and equity. That in proportion to the dissemination of knowledge in society, will that society be prosperous and happy, are facts that will not be questioned in this enlightened age. If then general education renders each individuals life and person more secure, affords protection to his property and promotes his happiness, is he not bound to contribute thereto, both his efforts and means, by the same law that binds him in war to contribute to the general protection and defence, and in peace to the support of law and government. And that which is the duty of one member of society is the duty of all. And as all the citizens of Maryland are but one large society, who have entered into a compact for the mutual protection of their lives and fortunes, for the promotion of order, intelligence, virtue and happiness, and to provide for the general welfare and defence of the whole body politic; and as the constitution of the State is the exponent of that compact, the Governor and members of the Legislature, the agents to carry it out, it is asmuch their duty to provide a system for the equal and general diffusion of knowledge among the people, as it is to provide a system for the equal and general administration of the laws. It is as much their duty to provide the ways and means for the support of education, as it is to provide the ways and means for the support of government, for it is in fact the support of government. If we inquire into the policy of the State in reference to this subject it will appear from the appropriations that have been made to promote education that they have considered it more a matter of gratuity than of a bounden duty. While the Governors of other States devote a

large portion of their messages to this subject our Governors scarcely allude to it. Whether the fact of their only speaking of the education of the blind is any evidence that their philanthropy is blind, we will leave to those acquainted with the social and political condition of the State, to determine. Well pleased are they, if they can keep the public mind fixed upon gigantic projects of internal improvements, while the legislatures of other States have been appropriating millions to education, the legislature of our own has been exhausting our treasures upon wild schemes of rail roads and canals, the completion of which would require the resources of the whole nation, (we allude to the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal from Baltimore to the Ohio river.) In the mean time they have been shockingly discreet in their appropriations to schools, having only applied the paltry sum of sixty-four thousand dollars to the promotion of general education, a sum entirely inadequate for such a great design. In this we have not included the twenty-one thousand dollars given to the colleges and academies, that being intended more to favour a select few than for any general purpose. And here permit us to express the opinion that these institutions have done more to suppress than to promote general education. They afford the rich and influential the facilities for educating their children. The consequence is that this class having but little direct personal interest in common schools withhold their voice and influence from them. But what has been the result of this dereliction of duty on the part of the State, and this partial use of her funds—a political depravity unknown in civilized communities, a social degradation that is distressing to humanity and a shame to the State. The members of this legislature have come from various sections of the country and they know the abject condition of the people arising from the want of an efficient system of schools. Saving and excepting the cities and towns and some populous, and wealthy sections of the State, and places where academies have been located, the greatest destitution prevails. There are whole neighborhoods almost or altogether destitute of the facilities for acquiring the rudiments of an education. Where it may be said, the bright sun of education never shone to illumine men's minds. Where ignorance holds her court of midnight gloom. Where scarcely a primary star lends a feeble ray. The shameful increase of political depravity is a lamentable evidence of the inefficiency of our school-system, vice no longer hides her frightful mien! Bribery and corruption stalk about the streets, and take possession of our polls. There are none in this legislature who do not know, that these vices do exist to an alarming extent there are but few who have not witnessed them, witnessed scenes that maketh the heart of the patriot sick. Is this "the country where liberty has erected her chosen empire?" Is this "the fruition of rational and regulated freedom?"

When the liberties of the State are at the subserviency of the purse, the united voice of thousands of our fellow-citizens come up to us. It comes from every nook and corner of our land, a cry

for food, the food of the mind. They are under the thralldom of a tyrant more inexorable than Nero, more relentless than Calligula. Despots may bind the body, but they cannot fetter the mind.

Where, we would ask, is the advantage of living in a land of freemen, if we have not the knowledge to think and act as freemen. What avails the glory and virtue of our institutions if we have not the mind, the intellect to appreciate them. What is it but mockery to guarantee rights and privileges to a people, and yet withhold the means and facilities for acquiring an education, to learn how to value and preserve such rights and privileges. But if it be admitted that there is a great necessity for action, immediate action, and that it is the duty of the Legislature to act—if “the State recognises it as a duty to educate her children,” what other duty, what other obligation, should deter her from it? Is there any thing more imperative than this? Is it seriously urged that the bond-holders, the Shylocks of Europe, are entitled to our favorable consideration, and that we must turn a deaf ear to the distressed claimants in our own State, our neighbors and friends. It is an unjust and unnatural sentiment.

The first step towards establishing an efficient system of education is to provide the necessary means; for systems without means are like characters traced in sand, or castles built in air. It is vain to talk of systems. Provide the means, and systems will soon follow; but no system will be efficient that has not the requisite funds to establish a free and general basis of common schools. The poor and rich must sit down together upon the same platform. The reproach, “charity scholar” must, be taken away. The pride and independence of our nature will not brook it. We had rather our children should remain in ignorance than be exposed to the taunt of these offensive words. Indeed there is something so humiliating in the sound of the words “*charity scholar*,” there is so little in them consonant with the genius of our institutions or with the spirit and progress of the age, that they fill the heart with anguish and disgust.

But how is a fund sufficient to establish a general system of free schools to be raised when the State is already groaning under the pressure of an enormous debt, and it is contended that our taxes, laid to meet the interest on that debt, and to defray the current expenses of the year are “as heavy now as can be comfortably borne.”

But let it be granted that it is the duty of the State first to provide the means necessary to meet her liabilities and the maintenance of her honor before she ought to grant any further sum to the perfecting of her school system; it becomes us then, in the first place, to inquire what amount will meet the annual obligations of the State, and then the amount raised by the present revenue laws. It appears from the report of the Treasurer in his estimate of “the probable further demands upon the Treasury for the ensuing year” that it will require \$912,000. He estimates the receipts into the treasury for the same time at \$1,218,000, leaving

a balance of \$306,000. It further appears that there is due by collectors, sheriffs and other officers the sum of \$627,000 00 and that there is a surplus remaining in the treasury, 484,892 00

making the sum now in and due the treasury,	1,111,800 00
Of this amount, sufficient will be realized to redeem,	
the funded arrears of interest, - - -	618,000 00
the expenses of a convention, if there should be one, - - -	100,000 00

and leave a balance of say, - - - \$200,000 00
 allowing \$193,000 00 for bad debts. Now it is demonstrable that if one half of the annual surplus revenue (putting it at the low rate of \$153,000 00,) be added annually to the operations of the sinking fund it will liquidate the entire debt in less than twenty-one years.

The one-half of the annual surplus revenue, incorporated with the present school fund, would constitute a fund whereby might be established a system of free, equal and general education. Then the question is resolved to this, will the State apply all her energies and resources to pay a debt in fourteen years, and bring her children up in ignorance, or will she defer that payment a few more years and give them the advantage of an education. Where is the philanthropist? Where the patriot? Where the statesman that would hesitate to decide between the two? Of the debts of the State, a portion is redeemable at pleasure, as long as the State continues to pay the interest with a provision for the payment of the principal, no one will complain, no one will be aggrieved. But by far, the greater portion of the debt will not be due for forty years. Now, we would like to know where gentlemen get the moral, civil or religious power, to bind the payment of a debt in thirteen years, not due for forty. The very object of these long periods would thereby be frustrated; for the debt was created for works of internal improvement, the State acting in the capacity of security. The long time was given to allow them to be completed, so that by their own operations they might be enabled to meet their obligations. Now, all the State is bound to do, is, to maintain her own honor as security, to provide for the payment of the annual interest, and the principal, when it becomes due. Now, is it not unjust and impolitic? Is it not going beyond the "stern path of honesty," to force the hasty payment of this debt, by the application of all the means convenient to be raised by taxation upon the property of the people, thus diverting from its more proper source "education," all the resources of the State, and thereby relieving the works from the greater portion of the obligations which their increasing revenue would have enabled them in a great measure, to meet in the time allowed.

We have, in foregoing remarks, attempted to show that it is the duty of the government to educate its youth. We have attempted to show the urgent necessity for such education. We have contrasted the duty of the State, with the conduct of the State in re-

ference to this matter. We have spoken of the financial condition of the State. We have contended, and do contend, that it is neither the duty or policy of State, under existing circumstances, to hasten the payment of her debts to the entire neglect of other imperative duties. We contend that the State has the means, ample means under the existing revenue laws, not only to pay the annual interest and current expenses of the year, but will have an annual surplus left, one half of which, annually added to the sinking fund, will meet the future demands of the State, leaving the other half to be applied to the purposes of education.

With these facts before us, and we believe them to be incontrovertable, what excuse can the State give to her neglected and injured children, and to the civilized world, for suffering them to remain in ignorance. She cannot urge "the maintenance of her honor and dignity." She cannot say, that is walking in the stony path of honesty, nor can she plead the stern requisitions of justice. We would admonish gentlemen to beware, lest in their zeal to maintain State pride, they do not draw down upon themselves the inglorious charge of being more proud than just; more regardful of the interest and welfare of foreign bond-holders, than of their own people, more pleased with a proud name abroad, than a good name at home, more mercenary than beneficent.

It is clear, very clear that Maryland has the means, even from her present revenue, to remedy "the imperfections of her educational system," and if she does not grant the relief, it will be the fault of will, and not of power. But, what is proposed to be done? A deferment of action until the debts of the State are paid, postpone it for fifteen years! Is it possible that such a thing can be seriously contemplated? who can give such a stay to his humanity? who can give such a scope to his philanthropy? Is this the answer, that we must return to the anxious inquiries? Is this the hope held out to the expecting thousands, who now look up to us for assistance? Is this the response to the "deep feeling," wait fifteen years and we will come to your rescue.

We conclude by asserting, that "no one race of men is possessed of the moral power to entail ignorance upon its successors, that wisdom and justice, good faith and the true interest of the people, will warrant, and does demand an application of some portion of the funds arising from the system of revenue now in operation." That no "consideration of duty or sound policy" would justify the filling of the pockets to the neglect of the heads of "the next generation." But at this late period of the session, and the evident disposition of the house, we are compelled to submit to a mere expression of our opinions, hoping that others may give more character to the subject.

JAMES F. BRAVARD,
T. W. P. RIDER.

